United Nations A/53/417/Add.1

General Assembly

Distr.: General
12 March 1999

Original: English

Fifty-third session
Agenda item 112
Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General containing the annual and quarterly reports on the acceptance of gratis personnel for the periods 1 October 1997 to 30 September 1998 and 1 July to 30 September 1998 (A/53/715) and, for the period 1 October to 31 December 1998, an advance draft of the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/C.5/53/54. The Committee also received an advance draft of the Secretary-General's report on the phasing out of type II gratis personnel (A/53/847), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/11 of 26 October 1998. During its consideration of the reports, on 17 February and 5 March 1999, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information.

2. The reports submitted by the Secretary-General contain an account of the actions taken pursuant to various resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly. However, the information in the reports, as well as the additional information provided to the Committee, confirms once again the Committee's views, expressed in past reports, particularly in the report contained in document A/53/417, that the hiring of gratis personnel has not been consistent with the resolutions of the General Assembly. Furthermore, as already pointed out by the Committee, in the majority of cases, the functions that were being performed by gratis personnel should have been performed by Secretariat staff since they were not functions with very specialized expertise not available to the Organization, as required under General Assembly resolution 51/243.

3. As indicated in annex VII to the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/53/715, as at 30 September 1998 Secretariat-wide gratis personnel totalled 134, of which 100 were in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations; the ratio of gratis personnel to Department staff was 34 per cent. As indicated in the summary of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/53/54), as at 31 December 1998 the total number of type II gratis personnel

99-06887 (E) 150399

remaining in the Organization was 94. The Committee notes from paragraph 10 of the Secretary-General's report (A/53/847) that, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/11, with the exception of one type II gratis personnel referred to in paragraph 9 of the report, all type II gratis personnel had been phased out by 28 February 1999.

4. The Advisory Committee notes the information contained in paragraph 9 of document A/53/847 and paragraph 8 of document A/C.5/53/54 regarding the continuation of one gratis personnel beyond 28 February 1999 in the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. This gratis personnel would continue until the end of June 1999 or "an earlier date on which the trial may conclude" (A/53/847, para. 9). Whether or not the reasons for continuance in service may have been valid, the Committee strongly believes that the concurrence of the General Assembly should have been sought before any exception was made, in order to comply with General Assembly resolution 52/234.

5. As indicated in paragraph 10 of the Secretary-General's report (A/53/715), 17 gratis personnel were considered as an exception in the recruitment for the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. In this connection, the Advisory Committee draws attention to paragraph 26 of General Assembly resolution 51/226, section III.B, in which the Assembly requests the Secretary-General "to extend to consultants and to personnel provided on a non-reimbursable basis the current practice of barring interns from applying for or being appointed to posts in the Secretariat for a period of six months after the end of their internships, and decides that persons on short-term appointments filling regular budget posts or extrabudgetary posts of one year or more cannot apply for or be appointed to their current post within six months of the end of their current service". The Committee points out that the procedure followed by the Secretariat was in contravention of the provisions of resolution 51/226 and that the Secretary-General should have sought prior concurrence either from the Assembly or, if it were not in session, from the Advisory Committee. The Committee trusts that in future this will not recur.

6. At the end of June 1999 (see para. 4 above) the Committee expects to receive confirmation that, without exception, all type II gratis personnel have been phased out.

7. The Advisory Committee notes that a panel of eminent persons has been classified as type II gratis personnel in the table following paragraph 13 of document A/53/715. On enquiry, the Committee was informed that these eminent persons were engaged on a $1.00 fee, plus travel costs and subsistence allowance through special service agreements. The Advisory Committee questions the classification of such a panel as type II gratis personnel.